

## Grade 11 - Informational

### Marty Glickman: Athlete, Sportscaster, and More

Tune in to a major sports broadcast. Chances are you'll hear the action described by a team of sports journalists. A "play-by-play" announcer narrates events occurring on the field while a "color commentator" adds insights into players' thoughts and backgrounds. Often these broadcasters are retired athletes, but this was not always true. The first "jock turned broadcaster" appeared in 1937. His name was Marty Glickman, and there is more to his story than an impressive sports and broadcasting career. He is also remembered for an early run-in with Adolph Hitler's anti-Semitic policies.

Marty Glickman was born in 1917. He carried Brooklyn's James Madison High School to a city football championship, and he became the city, state, and national sprint champion. Arguably the fastest man in the world at the time, Glickman attended Syracuse University, and starred in track and football. In a game against powerhouse Cornell University, Glickman scored two touchdowns and led Syracuse to a 14-6 upset victory. As a result, the owner of radio station WSYR asked the track and gridiron hero to be a sports broadcaster. Marty was a natural. This broadcast began a career that spanned seven decades!

Many people remember Glickman for covering the New York Giants and Jets in football and the New York Knicks in basketball. In addition, he hosted pre-game and post-game baseball shows for the Dodgers and Yankees. He was also the first TV announcer for the National Basketball Association. Two of today's top announcers, Bob Costas and Marv Albert, point to Glickman as an inspirational role model. What many people don't remember was that in 1936 in Munich, Germany, Marty Glickman was a victim of the Nazi policy of discrimination against Jews.

Although the United States and Germany would fight in World War II just a few years later, in 1936 there was an uneasy peace. Hitler proudly hosted the Olympic Games, hoping to prove that members of the Aryan race were superior, especially to people of Jewish or African descent, whom he called "mongrels." In that year, Glickman and Sam Stoller were the only two Jewish members of the U.S. Olympic track team. Their teammates included the legendary Jesse Owens. Although history eventually proved Hitler's beliefs were not true in sports or in war, he did manage to avoid some measure of humiliation regarding Glickman and Stoller.

The day before the 400-yard relay race, Avery Brundage, chairman of the U.S. Olympic committee, and assistant track coach Dean Cromwell pulled a switch. They had head track coach Lawson Robertson tell the two Jewish sprinters they were being replaced by Jesse Owens and Ralph Metcalfe, both of African American descent. Glickman and Stoller were incredulous. They were sure anti-Semitism and not athleticism was the issue. Robertson maintained that he was simply fielding the best runners. Glickman argued that any four U.S. sprinters would win easily. Jesse Owens joined the Jewish runners in protesting the decision, but to no avail.

Sports historians have wondered why Glickman and Stoller were benched. Had Adolph Hitler personally made the request? Was it more acceptable to him to be defeated by African Americans than by Jewish Americans? Many believe this. Others think Brundage and Cromwell might have acted on their own, out of sympathy for Nazi Germany. Both belonged to the America First Party, a political group that tried to keep the U.S. out of WWII.

In any case, the U.S. team won the gold, Owens's fourth of the Olympics. Sam Stoller retired in frustration but later came back to win an NCAA sprint championship. Marty Glickman and Jesse Owens remained lifelong friends. Glickman returned to Syracuse where he was an All-American, and he later had brief careers in both professional football and basketball before becoming a broadcasting legend.

In 1994 the New York Giants played an exhibition game in the Olympic Stadium in Munich. Their radio broadcaster, Marty Glickman, traveled with the team. He sat in Hitler's box and experienced what he described as "an eerie feeling." Nearly 60 years after being slighted by the forces of prejudice, Glickman reflected on all that had transpired.

Marty Glickman died in 2001. His autobiography, *The Fastest Kid on the Block*, was published in 1996.